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HINDU MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies. By the Abbé J. A. Dubois. Translated from the Author's later French MS., and edited with notes, corrections, and biography by Henry K. Beauchamp. With a Prefatory Note by the Right Hon. F. Max Müller, and a Portrait. Pp. xxxvi + 730. (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1897.)

THE work of the Abbé Dubois, both in the original French, and in the English editions—the one published in 1816, the other some thirty odd years ago—has long been a standard work on modern Indian customs, much valued and frequently quoted by ethnologists. But strange to say, what has hitherto been known as the Abbé's work is in fact merely a rough sketch and (as Mr. Beauchamp says) "only an extremely poor representation of what the Abbé's great work really was." The history of the book is peculiar. The French MS. of the original draft was placed in the hands of Major Wilks in the year 1806, when the Abbé had been about fourteen years in India. Major Wilks studied the work, and on his recommendation the MS. was, in 1807, purchased by the Madras Government and transmitted to London for translation and publication. Yet the English translation was not published until 1816. In 1815 the MS. was returned to the Abbé, and he "put into it all the additions and corrections suggested by many years of additional study and investigation; and when he sent it back to the Government of Madras, it was, practically speaking, a different work altogether." However, neither this revised MS., nor a finally corrected copy prepared by the Abbé three years later, have ever been used for the editions hitherto published, although both MSS. were sent to England and preserved in the India Office Library. One copy of the finally revised MS. was left in the records of Fort St. George, and this has now been translated and edited by Mr. Beauchamp, so that at last we possess the Abbé's work in its final and corrected shape.

The work of the Abbé Dubois is vastly superior to the ordinary accounts of travellers and missionaries in India. Few Europeans have succeeded in obtaining so much valuable information concerning the life of the natives as the Abbé. The secret of his success is best told in his own words (p. 10)

> "I had no sooner arrived amongst the natives of India than I recognised the absolute necessity of gaining their confidence. Accordingly I made it my constant rule to live as they did. I adopted their style of clothing, and I studied their customs and methods of life in order to be exactly like them. I even went so far as to avoid any display of repugnance to the majority of their peculiar prejudices. By such circumspect conduct I was able to ensure a free and hearty welcome from people of all castes and conditions, and was often favoured of their own accord with the most curious and interesting particulars about themselves."

That he went about in this way, and identified himself, as it were, with the people, makes the Abbé's account of Hindu manners, customs, and ceremonies so very valuable even in the imperfect form in which it has been known for years, and of course all the more valuable in its final and corrected form as presented to us by Mr. Beauchamp. Times have changed, no doubt, since the days when Abbé Dubois wrote. But Mr. Beauchamp is certainly right in saying that the work is "as valuable to-day as ever it was; even more valuable in some respects." For although the Abbé's work is merely an account of the inner life of the Hindus as seen and studied by him at the beginning of this century and in a limited area, viz. the country that lies south of the Vindhyan range, yet the broad facts of Hindu religion and sociology, as recited by the Abbé, are to a great extent true for a much wider area, and they are extremely instructive when compared with the facts known from ancient Hindu literature on the one hand, and with the manners and customs of the present day on the other.

Mr. Beauchamp has added some very valuable notes which go far to prove that the Hindu character is not quite as unprogressive as it is generally imagined to be, that even in India civilisation is not at a standstill, but that some progress has been made even within the short space of seventy or eighty years. On the other hand, if we compare the Abbé's account of Hindu life with what we know from ancient Hindu literature (and our knowledge of *ancient* Hindu life has become infinitely more accurate and comprehensive than it was when the Abbé wrote), we are constantly startled by the tenacity with which ancient customs survive in India. And for this very reason the Abbé's description is of inestimable value for the student of ancient India.

The most valuable parts of the book are those in which the author relates what he has seen himself. The Abbé is a shrewd and patient observer, and his account is full of the most interesting information about caste divisions, religious ceremonies and superstitions, about witchcraft, social customs, especially marriage rites (pp. 214–235), burial and mourning customs (pp. 321 *sq.*; 354 *sqq.*; 488 *sqq.*), about the status of women (pp. 315 *sqq.*, 339–370, &c.), infanticide, customary law, snake worship, cattle worship, &c. The Abbé has even a vague idea of what is now called comparative mythology (*cf.* p. 550 *sqq.*).

But what he relates, not from his own observation, but from literary documents (written in Sanskrit or Tamil), must be used with great caution, and should be compared with more recent and authentic publications, such as the works on Hindu law and ritual translated in the "Sacred Books of the East." The books from which the Abbé derives his information are mostly modern compilations of a sectarian character. Thus, the "Nittia-Karma" (rather "Nityakarma"), from which the author quotes largely (p. 238 *sqq.*), is evidently a text of the Vaishnava sect, and many of its details would not be applicable to members of other sects.

It must also be borne in mind that the Abbé is a Christian missionary, and his judgment is by no means unbiased. His strictures on the Hindu character are certainly most unfair, and his wholesale condemnation of the Brahmans as a class cannot be accepted by any serious student. Our acquaintance with the history of civilisation in India enables us to gain a far more favourable view, both of the moral and intellectual development of the Hindu nation. To quote only one example. What the Abbé says (p. 380 *sqq.*) about the learning of the

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Brahmans, contending that they have not systematically cultivated learning, and that they have not made any appreciable progress in its pursuit, is absolutely false in the light of our present knowledge of Sanskrit literature. A mass of scientific literature (on grammar, astronomy, medicine, philosophy) is there to contradict such a statement.

The Abbé's knowledge of Buddhism is derived from very secondary sources—evidently from accounts given by the most passionate opponents of the Buddhists. Hence he speaks of "this odious doctrine" of "pure materialism," and of "this abominable school" (p. 415) with utter contempt. Had he known Buddhism from its own literature, and been able to acquaint himself with Buddhist ethics, or had he known only the older and purer Sanskrit literature (which, indeed, in his days was scarcely accessible), his judgment of the moral character of the Hindus would probably have been less partial, and his picture of the Hindus as a nation would have shown brighter features than is the case now.

The editor and translator has performed his task very creditably. We should only have wished that the Sanskrit quotations had been given in a more correct form, and a more modern spelling of the Sankrit names and terms substituted for the spelling used by the Abbé. The index (of six pages to 724 pages of text!) is rather too meagre for a work of such an extent, and treating on such a variety of subjects. But these are minor faults in a work for which every Indologist and Ethnologist will be thankful.

M. WINTERNITZ.

FOSSIL PLANTS.

Fossil Plants for Students of Botany and Geology. By A. C. Seward, M.A., F.R.S., F.G.S. Vol. i. Pp. xviii + 452. (Cambridge University Press, 1898.)

THE botanical side of palæontology has been passed over in general treatises and text-books in a manner that shows the authors had little, if any, personal knowledge of fossil plants. This has been due to the want of any trustworthy elementary manual on the subject. Mr. Seward's admirable book, of which only the first volume is published, will supply this want. Though addressed to students of botany and geology, it must be regarded mainly as a guide to palæobotany for the benefit of the former, since no one not well versed in botany could follow the technical descriptions of such structures, for example, as the Calamites. On the other hand, introductory chapters on geology and the conditions under which fossil plants are preserved, enable the botanical student to read the book with no previous study of geology.

Mr. Seward, while not going so far as the late Prof. Williamson, who would diagnose no fossil plant which did not exhibit internal structure, lays great stress on the pitfalls in the way of those who have to determine fossil plants in which no structure is preserved. The group of jointed stems on p. 95, belonging to Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, Monocotyledons and Dicotyledons, is scarcely a happy illustration of the danger of trusting to superficial resemblances, since hardly any one at the present day would be likely to base determinations on such material without collateral evidence. In collecting and studying fossil floras, if these are at all extensive, it is easy to perceive whether they are from damp or dry stations, from temperate or warm climates, and so on; and such considerations would materially help in ascertaining whether Equisetum or Casuarina and Ephedra would be likely to be present. The worker, however, is rarely obliged to rely on isolated leaves or twigs, and an examination of the matted masses in which Equisetum is usually fossilised, is convincing as to the real nature of the plants. In dealing with late Cretaceous and Tertiary plants it may be well to remember that continental floras, now held to be indigenous to certain regions, have formerly been migratory over wide areas, and are probably now but sojourners on the spots they occupy. The genera composing them were associated together in the past much as they are now, a fact that may assist in their determination. Floras of oceanic islands have probably been indigenous from remote periods, as with the Tertiary plants of Madeira, which comprised few exotics.

Palæontologists may hardly agree as to the propriety of adding the terminations "ites" or "opsis" to recent genera when they have been proved to have existed in the fossil state, unless the nomenclature of plants is to differ from that of animals, otherwise we should have Nautilites, Terebratulites, Ostreites. Such terminations are more useful when implying doubt as to the actual identity of the recent and fossil genera. These, however, are minor matters, and the introductory chapters are on the whole so lucid and sufficient, presenting all requisite information in so concise and reasonable a manner, that there is little room for criticism.

Almost 300 pages of the first volume are devoted to the "systematic" description of fossil plants, beginning at the lowest and leaving off in the midst of vascular cryptogams. The lowest forms of plant life, unless partly siliceous or calcareous, are rarely preserved, and are of little interest to the geologist or palæontologist. The completeness with which even the largest seaweeds decay, especially the brown algæ, leaves little hope that many can have been preserved; and there can only be one opinion as to the wisdom of discarding all problematical markings. The ancient and gigantic Nematophycus is almost the only one determined with certainty. It was remotely allied to Laminaria, and is met with in Silurian and Devonian rocks. The Diatoms, so far, do not appear to be more ancient than the Lias. The Siphoneæ are a group of exceptional palæontological interest, and though most of the Caulerpites of old authors are passed over, the minute and often beautiful calcareous organisms so familiar to collectors of Eocene mollusca receive adequate attention. The very ancient Corallinaceæ, the plant nature of many of which has only recently been admitted, are fully dealt with, and the extensive part they are now known to have played as reef-builders is recognised. The Characeæ form a distinct group, the Charophyta, the fruits of Chara, so abundant in the Eocenes, first definitely appearing in the Jurassics, if not indeed in Palæozoic rocks.

The fossil Hepaticæ are of little interest, being so poorly represented in the fossil state, and of those recorded the author scarcely accepts any except the Marchantites of Sezanne and some of the fragments preserved in amber. Though it seems so probable that mosses must have been well represented in carboniferous

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